3.5(c)

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National
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Current Intelligence Weekly Summary

17 November 1978

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3.5(c)

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The WEEKLY SUMMARY, issued every Friday morning by the Current Reporting Group, reports and analyzes significant developments of the week through noon on Thursday. It frequently includes material coordinated with or prepared by the Office of Regional and Political Analysis, the Office of Economic Research, the Office of Strategic Research, the Office of Scientific Intelligence, the Office of Weapons Intelligence, and the Office of Geographic and Cartographic Research.

CONTENTS

National Foreign Assessment Center

17 November 1978

NR

Warning Notice
Sensitive Intelligence Sources and Methods Involved
(WNINTEL)

3.5(c)

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

NR

5 **Western Hemisphere**
Argentina

NR

3.5(c)

Comments and queries on the contents of this publication are welcome. They may be directed to the editor of the Weekly, telephone

Note: The *Current Intelligence Weekly Summary* ceases publication with this issue. The National Foreign Assessment Center has taken the decision to terminate the *Summary* with regret, but the emergence of other publications responsibilities over the past year or so has made its discontinuance necessary.

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SECRET

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

3.5(c) Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

ARGENTINA

The failure of the Argentine Government to settle the dispute with Chile over the Beagle Channel has focused attention in Argentina on the inefficiency of President Videla's system of consensus government. Conservative military leaders, who have long criticized Videla's moderate and conciliatory style, now appear to be gaining ground at the President's expense.

Although the present system of government calls for Videla to share power with the three service chiefs who make up the military junta, many senior Argentine officers are disturbed by Videla's insistence on gaining the military chiefs' agreement on all key matters. While Videla maintains military unity in this manner, many officers believe that authority at the top is overly diluted.

A recent Cabinet shuffle –in which Videla failed to make good on a promise to appoint prominent civilians to head the Ministries of Education and Justice— provided fresh evidence of his inability to assert his authority. The armed services also reportedly vetoed his first choices— retired officers in each case—to head the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Social Welfare.

Although [redacted] some officers are talking about replacing Videla, there is no [redacted] serious coup plotting or [redacted] wide military support for such a move. The possibility of a coup is remote so long as the dispute with Chile is Argentina's primary policy concern.

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The government, however, is divided over how to handle the Beagle Channel affair and has not decided on its next move. Last week, Argentina announced it is willing to accept a mediator, but it also insisted that another round of bilateral talks precede arbitration by a third party. Chile first raised the subject of outside mediation several weeks ago, but Argentina has been reluctant to go along.

A bilateral commission that had been trying since last February to arrange a settlement had reached an impasse when its tenure expired on 2 November. Since then, both nations have maintained their military forces in a high state of readiness. While no hostile moves have occurred, both sides remain concerned over the possibility of an armed confrontation. [redacted] 3.5(c)

At a Beagle Channel conference, Argentine President Videla (2nd from l) greets the Chilean delegation leader, Dr. Vicuna, observed by Admiral Massera (2nd from r) and Air Force Chief of Staff General Agosti

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NR
Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR
Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

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Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR
Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

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Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR
Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088

NR

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C06749088